

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Analyzing the Upsurge of Violence and Mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict

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This article aims to explore the mediation and upsurge of violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict in order to introduce new elements into the mediation focused on the structure of violence. It analyzes the definition of violence and its stages, structure, and retrospective dynamics within this conflict. The research demonstrates that the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict includes three kinds of violence manifesting through physical-behavioral deeds, structural-institutional and cultural violence. Physical-behavioral violence reached a peak again in January 2014, after a few years of relative silence. Current political structures and institutions are largely saturated with historical context based on negative memories (i.e. Sumgait pogrom, Khojaly massacres) and violence, accompanied by external posture and interests of international actors. This context constitutes cultural violence leading to antagonism and negative attitudes which result in violent behavior. The role of mediators (OSCE) in curbing violence seems to be insufficient largely because of its overwhelming focus on direct violence. It needs different strategies, resources and attitudes to find a proper solution to incorporate means dealing with the structural and cultural dimensions.

Introduction

Tensions and violence over the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh escalated in January 2014, with a number of incidents between Azerbaijani and Armenian forces at the line of contact (Kucera 2014). The number of incidents skyrocketed to hundreds per day, involving periodic exchange of fire and casualties on both sides. According to the information provided by Azerbaijan,¹ on January 28, 2014, the armed forces of Armenia violated the ceasefire 196 times

from their positions located both in the territory of Armenia and in the occupied areas—the number reached 250 a day later. In the meantime, Armenia claimed that it did not respond to indiscriminate firing, it responded only to precise shots (Interfax 2014). The dramatic upsurge of incidents and irreconcilable positions between the two Caucasian neighbors made it clear that the region is neither at peace nor stable. Additional measures should be undertaken to curb volatile actions and provide a final solution for reconciliation. Armenia and Azerbaijan have been engaged in a feud over Nagorno-Karabakh, a 1,700 square mile autonomous district of Azerbaijan with a population of 38,000, since the beginning of the 20th century.²

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The ethnic conflict embedded in Nagorno-Karabakh is, in part, due to the relationship that both groups have with the territory—they argue it is the cradle of their distinctive religious, cultural and linguistic identities (Kuburas 2011). The most active military engagement, along with outburst of incidents by uncontrolled groups, volunteers and mercenaries, occurred from 1989 to 1994. This resulted in ethnic cleansing and an unresolved territorial dispute: killing and injuring thousands, displacing hundreds of thousands, and resulting in serious human rights violations.³ After the active phase of the conflict, the Armenian side of Nagorno-Karabakh established 'the Republic of Nagorno-Karabakh' (in Armenian, The Republic of Artsakh),⁴ with its own governmental structure and armed forces. The most active phase of the conflict was over in 1994 when a ceasefire agreement was concluded between the parties to the conflict, under the mediation of Russia. However, it has not ended violence and tension over the disputed territory.

The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict has been widely analyzed by scholars, conflict management practitioners, international security experts and politicians. However, the conflict still poses a real threat to regional security and to communities. The trend and structure of its violence have not been addressed sufficiently. George W. Breslauer claims that while some issues have long since calmed down but that the dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh only remains stalemated due to the advantage of Armenia. But, he argues, it could flare up again if political circumstances changed (Breslauer 2011). Many researchers have devoted themselves to the search for a resolution to this conflict. Various options have been analyzed extensively by Svante E. Cornell who concludes that the final solution to the conflict is naturally dependent upon the evolution of the positions of the parties and upon domestic and international pressures on the negotiators—should negotiations be undertaken,

something which itself is by no means certain (Cornell 1999). Scholars tend to pay attention to the mediation efforts, primarily the role of OSCE.

According to Esmira Jafarova's recent analysis, despite all the good work that has been done so far, by treating both states the same—one being a victim of occupation and the other seeking to maintain its territorial acquisitions—risks the appearance of impartiality of the mediator (Jafarova 2014). Melita Kuburas analyzed the conflict through the lens of identity and underscored that the rebellions and violent clashes may not have exploded into a full-scale war had it not been for mobilizing elites in Azerbaijan and Armenia who commanded the armed forces. They implemented military strategies that simultaneously took advantage of Azerbaijan's political instability and Armenia's nationalist ambitions (Kuburas 2011). Anastasia Voronkova analyzed the relationship between nationalism, territory, and organized violence in the ethno-national dispute over Nagorno-Karabakh and advocated that a consideration of these dimensions has the potential to provide a fuller explanation of territorial rigidity than a single focus on the indivisibility of territory (Voronkova 2013). Yoko Hirose analyzed retrospectively the genocide issues in the conflict and discovered reciprocal ethnic slaughters (Hirose 2006). There are many social media websites and blogs that monitor the situation in Nagorno-Karabakh and provide multiple views and analysis on the role of external actors, negotiations, socio-economics, refugees and political-military developments.

The aim of this article is to thoroughly analyze the upsurge of violence in the conflict by explaining the structure and stages of violence and suggest the introduction of new mediation elements focused on the structure of the violence. The article consists of three main parts. The first part explains the definition of violence, its stages in ethnic conflict and its structure. It provides an analytical and methodological tool for the

research. The second part is focused on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict which is analyzed to understand its context, structure and current stage of violence. The third part is focused on mediation and its role in curbing violence in the disputed region. The authors have employed conflict management methodology to explain and analyze the research findings. This includes violence stages in ethnic conflict and the ABC violence triangle, which shows the structure of violence and helps identify the areas which need to be addressed to tackle the violence. The article is based on an extensive review of literature, field interviews and practical experience from the Caucasus region.

The article concludes that the conflict is not frozen and that the level of incidents is not a sheer coincidence which will reduce in the near future. The efforts of mediation to reduce the level of violence are focused exclusively on the behavioral part, leaving aside structural-institutional and cultural factors. It is of tremendous importance to address cultural and structural violence across the communities and the political elites through social media, media, community, joint discussions, reconciliation initiatives, small economic projects, an exchange of visits between the community leaders and joint NGO projects which would establish a framework for increasing contact between the communities in order to stop the violence.

Conceptualizing violence and its components

Violence is an inseparable element of social interactions and it nearly always accompanies conflicts. Violence and conflict have always played an important role in political and social processes, from the building of empires, states or private armies to the consolidation of identities, the drawing of borders or the creation of enemies or allies (Thorup et al 2008). John Galtung sees violence as avoidable insults to basic human needs, and more generally to *life*,

lowering the real level of needs satisfaction below what is potentially possible (Galtung 1990). Following armed conflict, the international community and society tend to focus exclusively on visible violence (its empirical objectivity and factuality), resulting in killing, maiming, deporting and displacing conflict-affected population. However, Michel Wieviorka suggests that we recognize the way subjectivity influences how violence is experienced, lived, observed, represented, desired or undergone by individuals, groups and societies. Therefore, an objective definition of violence will speak of a violent assault on the physical, intellectual or moral integrity of an individual or group of individuals (Wieviorka 2009: 5). Every conflict is rife with violence manifested in different forms. The roots of violence can be traced to social contexts, preferences, structural causes, psychology, and interests. The list of factors may well approach infinity. Tatu Vanhanen has proposed employing a five-level scale to measure the extent of ethnic violence in single countries (**Table 1**) (Vanhanen 2012).

Tatu Vanhanen originally conceived a five level scale (the authors added 4 levels related to the post-crisis period) which is based on exponentially-increasing acts of violent, gradually involving more territory and larger parts of ethnic groups in the conflict. It begins at the level of the individual and continues through to clashes between ethnic groups, leading to ethnic cleansing and genocide.

The current scale is a valuable instrument to assess the level of violence however it needs to be linked to intervention seeking to reduce violence. In other words, it is not enough to assess the level of violence because pure assessment does not lead to actions for intervention. Each stage has its intensity, features, indicators and potential responses that can be linked to national or international actions. Moreover, a six level scale covers only one part of the violence to be addressed. It can be supplemented with additional indicators deriving from sources,

Level	Indicators	Potential response
1	Minor incidents at the level of individuals	Grass-root level initiative, NGO projects
2	Serious incidents and attacks at the individual level, leading to death and destroyed property	National level interventions
3	Repeated ethnic violence in some parts of the country resulting in forced deportation and death	National level interventions with some external support
4	Extensive ethnic violence in significant parts of the country; ethnic rebellions or guerrilla movements; hundreds of people killed in ethnic violence; relatively large numbers of ethnic refugees; ethnic cleansings	External level interventions
5	Violent conflicts between ethnic groups or between ethnic groups and the government-dominated politics; ethnic civil war or serious separatist rebellion; thousands of people killed; number of refugees and displaced people rises to hundreds of thousands; genocide	External level interventions with offensive instruments
6	Sporadic acts of violence in some parts of the territory; cease-fire agreement ensures fragile peace however it does not completely solve the issues	Combined national and external interventions involving NGOs and civil society
7	Violence does not seem to be an appropriate tool to the conflict parties that obey cease-fire agreement or peace plan	Reduced external interventions, national and NGO efforts
8	Some incidents occur at a community level leading to violence	National level interventions with NGO efforts
9	Some volatile incidents occur at an individual level	NGO efforts

Table 1: Levels of violence.⁵

structure, context and systems. Conflict management literature offers some insights to improve our knowledge and research of violence. John Galtung proposed the widely used ABC (Attitude, Behavior and Context) triangle which can be a very good analytical tool to objectively perceive and analyze the phenomenon of violence (Galtung 1990).

It consists of three parts, covering behavioral violence (direct), structural-institutional and cultural (indirect violence). The most visible and obvious part of the violence is the behavioral one which results in death, intimidation, injury and torture. These acts of violence receive much of the attention during the course of conflict and the international community makes directed efforts

to stop such violence. Behavioral violence, in other words, can be defined as physical. It is easy to define, to identify and to prepare an intervention plan to control the situation. Large scale behavioral violence does not usually last for a long time and, in most cases, it involves highly intense violence and fighting. It can be identified at the earlier stages of the conflict as well. However, pre-crisis stages involve tension between the conflicting parties, avoidance of contact, polarization and skirmishes on a limited scale. Nevertheless, the concept of violence is to be understood in a broader way to include all its dynamics and causes.

As mentioned before, the duration of direct violence is rather limited and it is

triggered from by the structure and attitudes of the society. Attitudes, feelings or values causing direct violence belong to the second part of the triangle—cultural violence. Cultural violence forms and manipulates people's attitudes, values, mentality and feelings, transforming them into hatred, enemy-construction, suspicion, mistrust and direct violent behavior. According to John Galtung, cultural violence is when aspects of culture, the symbolic sphere of our existence – exemplified by religion and ideology; language and art, empirical science and formal science (logic, mathematics)—are used to justify or legitimize direct or structural violence (Galtung 1990). This leads to the classification and categorization of social groups and communities (i.e. liberals, homosexuals, Russians, Muslims, Native Americans, leftists), ascribing negative connotations and images to them and making them intolerable.

For example, the Russian president Vladimir Putin currently crafts cultural violence speeches, targeting the new government of Ukraine (right vs. wrong approach). He claims that the current government is illegitimate because Yanukovich was not properly removed from power by a formal impeachment. Putin said:

We see the rampage of reactionary forces, nationalist and anti-Semitic forces going on in certain parts of Ukraine, including Kiev. We understand what worries the citizens of Ukraine, both Russian and Ukrainian, and the Russian-speaking population in the eastern and southern regions of Ukraine. It is this uncontrolled crime that worries them. Therefore, if we see such uncontrolled crime spreading to the eastern regions of the country, and if the people ask us for help, while we already have the official request from the legitimate president, we retain the right to use all available means to protect those

people. We believe this would be absolutely legitimate (Lally 2014).

The former president of the Republic of Georgia Mikheil Saakashvili also quite often employed culturally violent language, creating negative vs. positive images across Georgian internal politics. Saakashvili commented once that:

It's beyond doubt that Ivanishvili took two billion dollars from Russia during the elations. He doesn't deny this and even if he does, there's no sense as Russians confirm this every time. Who will jail who, I'm not Ivanishvili's zebra for him to catch and cage me or any other domestic animal. One thing is their wish and the other what will be in reality. The reality will be that the Georgian people will give everyone their place. As for me, History will judge me and not a Zoo Director (Saakashvili 2013).

The third element of the violence triangle is related to structures and institutions. A conflict does not occur in a vacuum. Contexts, systems and structures provoke volatile and unpredictable behavior. Essentially, structural violence stems from rigid systems imbued with discrimination, segregation, colonialism, a denial of rights and liberties and the globalization of economies. Wherever systems discriminate between groups, communities and nations to the point of threatening lives and livelihood, this is structural or institutional violence (Fisher 2000). In practice, it is closely related to the North-South dilemma, gender issues, or a caste system, just to name a few. Violence can occur at any part of the triangle. However, it takes different forms, scales and manifestations which need to be understood when analyzing the situation on the ground. The triangle of violence depicted above is a very useful tool for conflict management analysis, demonstrating its parts, interconnectivity and visibility.

A clear understanding of violence in conflict management may serve well for an intervention to bring peace and stability.

Any intervention aiming to establish stability and peace requires a well-elaborated plan addressing all three dimensions of violence. It is an egregious mistake to address direct violence, setting aside the structural and cultural parts that may be causing physical violence in the long term. In other words, it is not possible to eradicate weeds by cutting their stems, leaving the roots in the soil. Structural and cultural violence embedded in the society and communities will not vanish by itself. It calls for different strategies, resources and attitudes. While direct violence can be dealt with by introducing a variety of measures like peacekeeping missions, neutral monitoring and demilitarized zones, indirect violence requires different tactics. Work needs to be done to change structural factors and positively influence deeply entrenched attitudes, feelings, and values.

Violence and its stages in the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh

The violence in Nagorno-Karabakh is closely linked to the elements of structural violence. A thorough analysis of the history of the conflict will help better perceive its volatile character and links. The historical dynamics relevant to the conflict can be observed from the 7th century onward. The Armenians and the Albanians⁶ were mixed and assimilated with each other, and forming 'the principality of Artsakh – Armenian.' Their neighbors, the Azeris, were formed through the influence of Islamization forced by the Arabian occupation in the 8th century and by the Turkic advance from the 11th century onward. Nagorno-Karabakh experienced extensive migration for various reasons and a large portion of the Armenians in the area moved from the mountainous area. The Islamization of the area progressed despite the Armenian resistance and it became a tributary state of the Persian Empire in 1639, as a result of several territorial conflicts between the Persian

Empire of Safavi and the Ottoman Empire, then the major powers of the East and West.

Later on, the Russian Empire, the major northern power, joined the struggle for the Caucasus region and in 1724 the Russian Tsar, Peter the First, encouraged the Armenians to migrate to the land of Azerbaijanis, resulting in Russian control over Nagorno-Karabakh. Then Russia began to control Azerbaijan administratively, after concluding the Gulistan Treaty with Persia in 1812. Russia proceeded with an invasion of Caucasus, pursuing Azerbaijan and colonizing Armenia with the Turkmanchay Treaty (1828), Edirne Treaty (1829), and by capitalizing on the Armenian Genocide⁷ by the Ottoman Empire (1895 and 1915). The latter significantly contributed to the forced migration of the Armenian population and largely increased their numbers in Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding area.

The 19th century marked the start of confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan communities for various reasons including economic, social, political and ethnic clashes. It is also worth noting the religious dimension incorporating the confrontation between Islam and Christianity which stimulated the antagonized relations between Armenia and the Tatars (old name of Azeris). The conflict expanded, eventually involving all major nations of southern Caucasus by 1905. The war escalated, resulting in indiscriminate mutual massacres all over the South Caucasus by 1907. The clashes which took place in 1905 (in February in Baku, in May in Nakhchivan, in August in Shusha and in November in Elizavetopol) were the most serious and left many towns, including the Baku oil fields, in ruins. Although, on a smaller scale, there were some clashes that occurred even in Tbilisi. It seems that both sides were accountable because the Azerbaijanis fired the first shots in Baku and in Elizavetpol but the Armenians started violence in Shusha and in Tbilisi. There is some speculation that this war was part of a Russian plot to suppress nationalism. The

revival of Armenian nationalism was one of the factors that also contributed to the fragile and tense relationship between the two nations. The nationalistic policy echoed and accounted for the Armenian genocide conducted by Ottoman Empire in 1915.

The genocide itself led to increased Armenian nationalism and the inclusion of the Azerbaijani community into a negative narrative, due to their ethnic similarity to the Turks. The next stage of violence in the Armenia-Azerbaijan confrontation occurred right after the Russian revolution which resulted in a nationalistic response creating three nationalist parties in the South Caucasus (Georgia's Menshevik, Azerbaijan's Musavat and Armenia's Dashunaktun) and established 'The South Caucasus Federation' on 22 April 1918 (it survived until 1920). The two years of relative independence were turbulent between Armenia and Azerbaijan, engulfed by armed conflict and violence. Consequently, Azerbaijan ceded the Yerevan-district to Armenia on 29 May 1918. Armenia ceded all of Surmalu and Nakhichevan, as well as the predominantly Armenian districts Akhalkalak and Akhaltsikhe to the Ottoman Empire, Georgia and Azerbaijan according to the Treaty of Batumi which was signed between the Ottoman Empire and 3 South Caucasus states. The issue of Nagorno-Karabakh erupted once the soviet republics of Azerbaijan and Armenia were established. Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan, with predominantly Armenian populations, requested to be part of Armenia; however the USSR respected their relationship with Turkey, and decided Nagorno-Karabakh would be a part of Azerbaijan.⁸ This territorial decision should be considered one of the most complicated reasons for the present Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Although it was almost impossible for the USSR to accommodate the borders following a geographic distribution of nations, the principle of an antagonistic border policy as a means of controlling the Caucasus region was very clearly the then central Communist Party's intension

(Coalson 2013). Armenia kept requesting to modify the borders and return Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan to Armenia, which would have helped to support an idea of 'Great Armenia' extending from Black Sea to Caspian Sea. In addition, for the Armenian nationalists, it would have served as revenge against the Turks who were linguistically and culturally similar to Azeris.⁹

During the soviet times, the two communities cohabitated with no significant eruption of violence. This was due in large part to the soviet policy which sought to integrate segmented societies and satisfy their needs. It was primarily done through the principles of totalitarian regime because the methods applied in pluralistic societies would not have worked. The potential use of force, imprisonment, the increased role of the Communist party, the creation and existence of external threat served well to curb the internal conflicts and violence. Nevertheless, one event showed that the Nagorno-Karabakh issue was not over. On 24 April 1965, a ceremony commemorating the 50th anniversary of the genocide by the Turks was held, with permission of the authorities, in Yerevan and a crowd of 100,000 people fell into disorder leading to many arrests and unrest in the city (Furman 1992). The authorities began to intensify the oppression of nationalism and such demonstrations did not gain any traction, except for leading to the arrest of organizers and an open letter to soviet leaders which were both generally ignored (Bohdan & Victor 1990: 367, 379–380).

The situation was radically shaken up under the new leadership of Mikhail Gorbachev who introduced a new system, values and even ideology. This led to partial freedom of speech, mass movement, request for a reexamination of the history, democratization, liberalization, and restoration of the 'nation.' The question of Armenia-Azerbaijan relations was at stake again. The retirement of Heydar Aliyev was treated as a moment of weakness in Azerbaijan which needed to be seized by Armenia. He had

entered the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union under Andropov, assuring the powerful status of Azerbaijan in the center. His retirement suggested the fall of Azerbaijan's power in the USSR and their control within the republic. Furthermore, relations between Armenia and Azerbaijan were strained as a result of the Armenian genocide and the lost territories. The Armenian intelligentsia and diaspora focused much of effort on promoting their interests both internally and externally.

At the initial stage it brought about positive results. Russian politicians along with Sakharov's family took the Armenian side; the Armenian diaspora successfully generated financial and political support for their ideas and in 1987, Armenia started a campaign calling on the central government in Moscow, and unofficially the international community, to resolve the Nagorno-Karabakh problem. After the first demonstration in Yerevan in October 1987, demonstrations occurred very often in Nagorno-Karabakh. On 1 December 1987 and 5 January 1988, the Nagorno-Karabakh delegation appealed directly to the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party. After that, hostility increased so much that many movements and campaigns for collecting signatures were begun in Nagorno-Karabakh as well as at various parts of Armenia.

Azerbaijan claims that violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict appeared around November 1987 in Armenia because Armenia tried to force Azerbaijani out. Then many Azerbaijani, having suffered violence, arson, plunder and rape, escaped to Azerbaijan to find shelter.¹⁰ Most of them being farmers, they wished to be moved to rural areas. However, an industrial policy resulted in their transfer to Sumgayit, the industrial city situated near from Baku.

The Armenian movement reached its peak in February 1988. On 20 February, the Supreme Soviet of Nagorno-Karabakh, Autonomous Oblast, requested of the Supreme Soviet of Azerbaijan and Armenia, and of the government of the USSR for

Nagorno-Karabakh's transfer to Armenia. Azerbaijan rejected the request on the grounds that the request was against Article 78 of the constitution of the USSR. Established in 1977, it ruled that the territories of the republics of the USSR were changeable only by mutual agreement between corresponding republics and ratification by the USSR. In response the Armenian intelligentsia formed 'the Karabakh committee' and started massive demonstrations and unrest. On 22 February 1988, two young Azeris were killed by an armed soldier of the Dashunaktun Party (Armenian nationalist party), near Askeran of Nagorno-Karabakh¹¹ and this information spread to throughout Azerbaijan immediately and triggered Sumgayit incident. On the same day, more than 12 districts with predominantly Azerbaijanis, were attacked by armed members of the Dashunaktun Party, forcing them to leave the area.

The situation pressed the central party into taking countermeasures and Gorbachev sent a number of executive members of the party to Yerevan and Stepanakert on 23 February. In addition, he had a long talk with the Armenian intelligentsia, who were leading the movement, and convinced them to give up the border change to prevent a chain reaction throughout USSR (Seiichiro 1996). While troops were sent to Yerevan, the demonstration did not lose its spirit or energy. On the contrary, the number of demonstrators exceeded one million and a half. Therefore, Gorbachev issued the 'Declaration of Self – Restrained Conducts' to the residents in the two republics. However the declaration did not work. In Sumgayit, where many refugees were concentrated, Armenians were massacred on 28 February 1988. According to the most popularly accepted view, a riot brought on by a group of hooligans developed into a massacre, though there are many different stories of the incident and Armenia and Azerbaijan disagree on the facts.¹² As a result, 26 Armenians and 6 Azerbaijanis were killed, 197 injured and 86 Azerbaijanis arrested.

Sumgayit was the turning point of the violence in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict.

Azerbaijan claimed that the incident was planned by Armenian side and that they only retaliated. Furthermore, Azerbaijan claimed that most of them did not participate in the genocide and they protected Armenians instead, insisting the number of Armenians victims would have been much larger in number had they not done so. On the other hand, Armenians underscored that the massacre had been planned systematically by Azerbaijani leaders. For example, the First Secretary of the Sumgayit City Communist Party was waving the Azerbaijani flag during the incident; Azerbaijan held a public meeting at Baku and Sumgayit on 21 February (Raevski 1992).

While this article does not claim to provide the ultimate truth about the incident, it presumes that the resentment of Azeri refugees and the characteristics of the time that strained nationalism and hostility were contributing factors. USSR authorities reacted to the incident by introducing martial law and by sending heavy armaments into the area; surveillance of intelligentsia was intensified and manipulation of information began. The Supreme Soviet of the USSR, to put the brakes on the armed collision, instated a special administration placing Nagorno-Karabakh under the direct control of the Kremlin—temporally (the governor-general was Arkady Boriskii) beginning on 20 January 1989. On 28 November 1989, administrative power was returned to Azerbaijan due to the complaints raised by the Azerbaijan government. At that point Armenian protests increased in frequency and became more radical. Also in Azerbaijan, where the increase in nationalism was relatively slow, the people's front was gaining influence by the end of 1989.

Under these circumstances, a massacre of Armenians occurred in Baku on 13 January 1990. Although the violence had been put to rest, on January 20 the Soviet army entered Baku under the pretext of the settling the massacre, and many Azerbaijanis, including women and children, were killed. This so-called 'Black January,' was the result of the Kremlin's aim to contain the movement of

the People's Front and should be analyzed in the context of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. This incident is remembered as being part of the conflict because it is linked with the memory of the Azerbaijani massacre by the Armenians and the Russians at the end March 1918. Furthermore, it inspires resentment toward the Russians who supported Armenia.

In 1991, Azerbaijan and Armenia declared independence just before the USSR collapsed in December 1991. After that, Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh presented a united front against Azerbaijan and the conflict escalated into the all-out war (although without the proclamation of war) in which Soviet arms and mercenaries were used. Armed clashes ensued and following the dissolution of the USSR both sides began massive military operations. Both sides committed indiscriminate attacks including air-raids against civilians. Many villages were razed and both nations endured many casualties and injuries. The 'Khojaly-genocide,' between 900 to 1000 Azerbaijani, including elderly, women and children, were massacred indiscriminately on 26 February 1992, still remains one of the serious factors obstructing a peaceful settlement for the AZE. The period from 1991–1994 was one of the most volatile and turbulent of the conflict. In 1994 Russia played a major role in managing the conflict and offered a ceasefire agreement (Bishkek protocol) to be signed. This protocol remains of tremendous importance being the only ceasefire agreement setting obligations for the conflict parties. It curbed the scale of violence in the region which has remained fragile and unpredictable.

A short retrospective discourse clearly demonstrates that violence has prevailed despite varying in intensity.

As depicted in **Table 2**, the level of violence reached its peak three times, resulting in an outbreak of casualties, refugees and destroyed property. It started between 1905 and 1907 with armed engagement between the communities and was resumed in the 1918–1920 period and subsided in the Soviet period. Nevertheless, the beginning of

Year	Situation	Parties involved	Level of violence
1905–1907	Armeno-Tatar war	Armenians and Tatars	5
1918–1920	Clashes between independent Armenia and Azerbaijan	Armenians and Azeris	5
1948–1953	Sporadic violence between Armenians and Azeris	Armenians and Azeris	2
1988–1990	Sumgait pogrom, ethnic incidents, refugees	Armenians and Azeris	3
1991–1994	Nagorno-Karabakh conflict	Armenians and Azeris	4–5
1994–2014	Ceasefire period involving periodic incidents	Armenians and Azeris	6

Table 2: Levels of violence over Nagorno-Karabakh.

the collapse of the Soviet Union led to new narratives and a simmering feud between Armenia and Azerbaijan which became more violent. It reached the highest level of violence between 1991 and 1994. The period from 1994 to 2014 was relatively calm with some outbreaks of violence. For example, 16 soldiers on both sides were killed along the cease-fire line in 2008. In June 2012 there was an escalation of violence along the cease-fire line and about a dozen soldiers from both sides were killed. Serious escalation in fighting started on 20 January 2014 along various front-line areas, with both sides blaming the other, and there was a return to hostile rhetoric by officials and in the media. Details surrounding the 20 January clashes are unclear. Armenia claims Azerbaijan attempted to break through the front lines, vowing 'retribution' after 1 Armenian soldier was killed (Kucera 2014).

The ceasefire agreement partly reduced the acts of behavioral violence and the scale of the conflict. However, it could not deal with structural and cultural violence which largely prevailed within the communities. The context of the conflict implies a number of variables forming a system promoting violent behavior. The conflict system involves regular clashes, massacres and confrontations between the two nations, supported by different international actors. Current political

structures and institutions are largely saturated with historical context based on violence and they instigate cultural violence making the communities more antagonistic and providing them with cultural perceptions leading to behavioral violence. For example, both communities' governments contributed to the cultural violence in the case of Azerbaijan's August 2013 pardon to Ramil Safarov, an Azerbaijani military officer who had killed an Armenian soldier (Gurgen Margaryan) in Hungary in 2004.¹³

Both men had been participating in a NATO-sponsored training seminar in Budapest. Safarov killed Margaryan while he was sleeping in his dormitory. Safarov insisted that Margaryan had insulted the Azerbaijani flag (Grigorian 2006). Safarov was sentenced to life imprisonment in Hungary with a minimum incarceration period of 30 years. However, he was later freed and welcomed by the Azerbaijani people as a great hero despite the criticism received from the international community. This incident demonstrates some of the feelings, values and attitudes the people in region hold that may lead to violent behavior. While this incident did not result in the violence *per se*, it laid the foundation for additional violence. The level of violent incidents will increase unless the mediators (OSCE) make serious efforts to handle all three components of violence.

The role of mediation in curbing violence in Nagorno-Karabakh

Violence consists of three main components. However, ceasefire agreements, or non-use of forces treaties, focus mainly on cessation of hostilities dealing with only physical-behavioral violence. Ideally, such agreements should respond to the roots of cultural and structural violence which remain within the communities if not addressed. The Bishkek protocol, which is a provisional cease-fire agreement signed in May 1994 sponsored by Russia, played a major role in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The following elements are set forth in the protocol (Blair 1996):

1. to grant a wide range of autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh, while maintaining sovereignty of Azerbaijan¹⁴;
2. some measures to guarantee the security for Nagorno-Karabakh;
3. Armenian withdrawal from the occupied territories in Azerbaijan;
4. to take special measures for the Lachin corridor to link Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia (possibly coupled with similar measures between Azerbaijan and Nakhichevan);
5. to make arrangements between Azerbaijan and Armenia so that at least the major portion of the refugees on both sides may return to their homes;
6. efforts to be made by the international community to support economic reconstruction of both nations.

Unfortunately, this does not satisfy the conflict parties and Armenia insists on the right of self-determination, while Azerbaijan refers to the principles of territorial integrity, non-aggression at the border and respect for sovereignty. It asserts that Nagorno-Karabakh should be granted the largest autonomy within Azerbaijan.¹⁵ This complicated situation is mediated exclusively by OSCE. The OSCE Minsk group proposed a two-step approach, that called for (1) all Armenian forces to withdraw from Azerbaijani land

except Nagorno-Karabakh, and then (2) to start the negotiation on the final status of Nagorno-Karabakh. This is supported by Azerbaijan.

The second part is a package plan in which all Armenian forces are to withdraw after the peace settlement. This is supported by the Armenians. The third step, known as the common-state plan, provides that Nagorno-Karabakh and Azerbaijan will form a federation.¹⁶ This seems to be the most convincing. Lastly, the 'Gobl Plan,' which proposes the exchange of the zone between Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh called the Lachin corridor, with the zone between Azerbaijan and the enclave Nakhichevan.

Ultimately, the legal status of Nagorno-Karabakh is the largest barrier for peace. Furthermore, the involvement of foreign countries such as Russia, the US, Iran, and Turkey has complicated the situation and stagnated the peace process. Concerning the peace process, face-to-face meetings of the two presidents are considered most effective but both presidents have been extremely sensitive due to their own domestic situations and have been taking cautious attitudes towards the peace process. This was particularly the case following the 27 October 1999 assault on the Armenian parliament.¹⁷

Over the years, Armenia and Azerbaijan's positions have not modified much. Azerbaijan insists on territorial integrity of Azerbaijan, and the withdrawal of the Nagorno-Karabakh army troops from the occupied areas as a precondition of the peace negotiations. Nagorno-Karabakh must be under Azerbaijani sovereignty and the Azerbaijani population from Nagorno-Karabakh should not be expelled from the peace process. Azerbaijan can agree neither to the settlement of the Russian military bases in Azerbaijan, nor to set the peacekeeping operation (hereinafter referred as PKO) by Russia. A large number of Azerbaijani intelligentsia, such as Aydyn Mirzazade, Eldar Namazov, and Mubariz Ajgmedoglu (Karagyoziyan 2004), express their displeasure

that many of their past concessions, including a proposal to grant the highest autonomy to Nagorno-Karabakh, have been neglected by Armenians. However, some wish to secure the peace settlement by with further consideration of the question of human rights.

As far as the popular opinion of the Azeri, it is not simple. Some people tend to treat Armenia as good friends from the Soviet period and do not have a negative opinion of them. Nevertheless, examples of cultural violence are widespread in Azerbaijan. For example, TV channels broadcast the pictures of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict almost every day. Some refugees are quite emotional towards Armenians, demanding revenge.¹⁸ Until the situation has been stabilized, 'the international PKO' led by the UN will be deployed in and around the occupied area. However, Armenia has been against the introduction of this PKO form the beginning, and it seems to be very difficult for all actors to be satisfied because of their divergent interests.

Azerbaijan and Armenia should cooperate in the economic realm, as they share similar business interests. Unfortunately, Armenia holds a relatively strong positing and does not seem to be very flexible (University of Michigan 1996). Armenia demands respect for national self-determination and international recognition of the independence of the 'Nagorno-Karabakh Republic.' The leaders of both Azerbaijan and Turkey should cease their belligerent statements and the blockade of Armenia and Nagorno-Karabakh. It would be necessary to stage a referendum on self-determination under the observation of the UN.

The Armenian government and intelligentsia stick to their position that the conflict is an Azeri civil war and insist that peace negotiations should be held between Baku and Stepanakert.¹⁹ In addition, throughout the peace process, they criticize Azerbaijan over their policy not to join discussions, to stick to meaningless international law, and to propose the construction of a cooperating

relationship as the precondition for the peace settlement. Ordinary Armenians claim that Nagorno-Karabakh is their native land and they are conspicuously critical of the Azeris for their adherence to Nagorno-Karabakh despite their challenges managing it. For them, the history cannot be forgotten. They do not want to repeat it any more, and thus they are quite against concessions. However, there are some constructive opinions supporting a plan to form the common-state on the premise of mutual concessions, giving priority to the comprehensive discussions of Nakhichevan, another native land for them, and starting efforts to construct a cooperative relationship.

In contrast with the situation in Azerbaijan, the situation in Armenia is quite the opposite. Pictures of the conflict have rarely been broadcast on TV and the civil population has almost forgotten the fact that the present situation remains in a cease-fire. During field interviews, many responders mentioned that the news about the peace talks between the two presidents might lead people to be reminded, to a degree, of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Many other interviewees from the opposition parties, NGOs and academic community stated that the Nagorno-Karabakh discussion should better be suspended.²⁰ When the author asked again 'If you had frozen the situation, you could not resolve other occupied territories, even if Nagorno-Karabakh had been admitted under the jurisdiction of Armenia.' Many interviewees said that 'Armenia won the war, it is proper that Nagorno-Karabakh should be transferred.'

Armenians share the view that Nagorno-Karabakh should be independent at the very least, even if this would renew armed conflict; they could surely win, since they have been strongly supported by Russia. War-weariness has been forgotten among Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh due to a social decline and aggravation of the political and economic situation. Hatred towards the Azerbaijanis has eased, and Armenian businessmen, who

prefer trading with the Azerbaijanis on the eastern border, have increased.

The international mediation of the conflict has achieved some progress. However, due to a lack of neutrality its outcomes are less clear. The current composition of OSCE Minsk group of co-chairmen does not seem to be neutral. France and Russia quite obviously support Armenia, while US is making an attempt to balance between Azerbaijan and Armenia. While French support is related to the influence of the Armenian Diaspora and political context, the Russian Federation has very strong military and political ties along with its strategic interests in South Caucasus. Dr. Esmira Jafarova concludes that although, the OSCE has the ability to make a difference in the conflict resolution process and its co-chairs have been highly engaged with mediation and facilitation work. However, in its present format the group does not have the capacity and necessary tools to achieve a lasting peaceful solution to the conflict. Despite all the good work done so far, by extending the same treatment to both states – one being a victim of occupation, while the other is seeking to maintain its territorial acquisitions – the OSCE runs the risk of losing its place as an impartial mediator (Jafarova 2014). It is assumed that the best option would be to introduce a neutral party that could bring about a break-through in the peace process.

However, it is almost impossible to achieve agreement among all the parties concerned. Even if a commitment by the third parties were to be made without any kind of agreement among the parties concerned, the Armenians would think that it was not neutral and the prospect of a peaceful settlement would be worsened. The mediation by OSCE has been stagnating for a long period; however the possibility for progress through a peace agreement appeared in 2008. A UN General Assembly resolution identified Nagorno-Karabakh as part of Azerbaijani territory and requested Armenia to withdraw its troops. Russia was pre-occupied with

the consequences of the Russia-Georgian war and recognition of the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia. This provoked Russia's proposal to the Turkish Prime Minister, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, to lead the peace plan in the Caucasus; thus, Turkey proposed a 'Caucasus Stability and Cooperation Platform' just after the Russia-Georgia War.²¹ Turkey then started a peace process with Armenia, which resulted in a historical agreement establishing diplomatic relations after nearly a century of animosity – in spite of strong opposition from both states.

Nonetheless, these initiatives never progressed to real peace between Turkey and Armenia. Russia then began intensive mediation between Azerbaijan and Armenia, facilitating some occasional talks between the Azerbaijani and Armenian sides, which culminated in the 'Declaration between the Republic of Azerbaijan, the Republic of Armenia and the Russian Federation (Moscow Declaration)' and the Kazan summit. Russia also led talks among the Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Russian Foreign Ministers, which resulted in the 'Moscow Declaration' of 31 October 2008. The 'Moscow Declaration,' however, does not address such important problems as state status. It also is remarkable because it was the first agreement between Azerbaijan and Armenia after the 1994 cease-fire agreement, but it was not a substantial contribution to the peace process. In addition, Medvedev held the Kazan Summit with the Azerbaijani and Armenian presidents in an attempt to solve the Nagorno-Karabakh problem in June 2011. Unfortunately, Azerbaijan refused to sign the proposed document.

So far the antagonism between Azerbaijan and Armenia has been so strong that it seems impossible to achieve a settlement at the present time without mediation by third parties. In terms of mediation, mediation by third parties or international organizations would be better than that by any 'country.' A peaceful settlement through the mediation by OSCE Minsk group is uncertain. However,

it remains the most realistic hope for the time being. The mediation should start with very little steps, addressing the issues on the ground. It is obvious that the question of status is fundamental and to find a mutually acceptable solution is an extremely tough assignment. Therefore it is important to address violence at a community level through social media, media, community, joint discussions, reconciliation initiatives, small economic projects, exchanges of visits between the community leaders, and joint NGO projects. This would erect a platform for establishing contact between the communities and setting aside cultural violence patterns which are embedded across the communities.

Conclusion

The article addressed the role of violence and mediation in the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. Having analyzed the concept of violence and its structure and context in the conflict, together with the role of mediation in curbing violence, the research would offer the following concluding points:

The current methodological approach towards the stages of violence needs to be improved. A five-level scale to measure the extent and importance of ethnic violence has been updated to link it to intervention seeking to reduce violence and to demonstrate its reduction after the most active phase of a conflict. Moreover, each stage has its intensity, features, indicators and potential responses that can be supplemented with additional indicators deriving from cultural and structural violence. The Nagorno-Karabakh conflict includes three kinds of violence manifesting through physical-behavioral deeds, structural-institutional and cultural violence. Physical-behavioral violence reached a peak again in January 2014, after a few years of relative silence, harsh rhetoric from both sides led to proactive intervention by OSCE.

The analysis of violence demonstrates that the 2014 violence was characteristic

of this conflict. The violence spiked (stage 5) periodically, starting in 1905–1907 with armed engagement between the communities which was resumed in 1918–1920 and again revived in parallel with the collapse of the Soviet Union. The period of 1994–2014 can be characterized as having reduced violence with some outbreaks and it seems the volatile behavior will continue. The ceasefire agreement (Biskek Protocol) partly reduced the acts of behavioral violence and its scale. However, it did not deal with structural and cultural violence which remain. Current political structures and institutions are largely saturated with historical context based on negative memories (i.e. Sumgait pogrom, Khojaly massacres) and violence, accompanied by external posture and interests of international actors. This context constitutes cultural violence leading to antagonism and negative attitudes which result in violent behavior.

The role of mediators (OSCE) in curbing violence seems to be insufficient because it does not address all three dimensions of violence. Structural and cultural violence embedded in the political elite, society and communities will not disappear by itself. OSCE needs different strategies, resources and attitudes to find a proper solution and to influence positively attitudes, feelings, and values that have been strongly affected by the conflict. It is a mistake to concentrate only on direct violence, ignoring the structural and cultural dimensions, which drive violent behavior. Behavioral violence is very visible, capturing the attention of the international community. But concerted attention must also be addressed to structural and cultural violence.

Efforts to target structural and cultural violence an employ social media, media, community, joint discussions, reconciliation initiatives, small economic projects, the exchange of visits between the community leaders, and joint NGO projects which would establish contact between the communities, reducing violence. The conflict is far from

resolved and the level of incidents in January 2014 reflects the lack of attention to cultural and structural dimensions of the violence.

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Notes

¹ Letter dated 29 January 2014 from the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Azerbaijan to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the President of the Human Rights Council. United Nations. A/HRC/25/G/5.

² Historical dynamics relevant to the conflict can be observed from the 7th century. 'Nagorno' means 'mountainous' in Russian and 'Karabakh' means 'black garden' in Azerbaijani. After the collapse of USSR, Azerbaijanis call it 'Dagliq (mountainous) Garabagh' or 'Yukhari (highlands) Garabagh,' while the Armenians refer to its old name 'Artsakh.' Similarly, Armenians named the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh 'Stepanakert' and Azerbaijan – 'Hankendi.'

³ There are various estimations about the number of victims. The estimated number of people killed is between 15,000 and 20,000 (approximately 17,000: 11,000

Azeris and 6,000 Armenians). The estimated number of injured: 50,000 (30,000 Azeris and 20,000 Armenians). There were about 345,000 Armenian refugees and about 1,000,000 Azeri refugees.

⁴ The declaration of the independence was issued on 6 January 1992 based on the 'Referendum' in 1991.

⁵ Developed, supplemented and adapted by the authors from Vanhanen 2012: 38–66.

⁶ It is thought to be one nation of the Caucasus families of language, and there is no relationship with the Albanian of the present Balkans.

⁷ Article Two of the UN Convention on Genocide of December 1948 describes genocide as carrying out acts intended 'to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.' Argentina, Belgium, Canada, France, Italy, Russia and Uruguay are among more than 20 countries which have formally recognised genocide against the Armenians. The European Parliament and the UN Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities have also done so. The UK, US and Israel are among those that use different terminology to describe the events (BBC 2010).

⁸ Following the Kars Treaty which was concluded on 13 November 1921, both Nagorno-Karabakh and Nakhichevan became autonomous areas within the Azerbaijan Republic. Nahichevan eventually became an enclave of Azerbaijan because Armenia acquired Zangezour-district in 1921.

⁹ This demonstrates the organization entitled 'Karabakh for Armenia' which was established in 1926. Although it was once dissolved by the pressure from the center, it was reorganized in 1929 to escalate anti-Turkism. In 1945 and 1949, the petitions were sent to Moscow requesting unification of Nagorno-Karabakh with Armenia. Taking advantage of the unrestrained mood of the Khurshchev era, the

number of petitions were increased during the first half of 60s, but the authorities answered only 'we can not handle this problem now,' and the movement fizzled (Bohdan & Victor 1990: 218).

¹⁰ Field interview by Yoko Hirose in Baku (2000).

¹¹ Although there are many testimonies that the people who killed the two Azeris were Azeri policemen, the authorities maintained that the criminals were the Armenians. Therefore some people insist that the incident was planned by the authorities with an aim to worsen the relations between the Azerbaijan and the Armenia.

¹² Field interview by Yoko Hirose in Baku (2000). There are many rumors concerning the Sumgayit incident, which triggered the armed conflict. Just before the incident, more than 60 confirmed criminals were granted amnesty, then organized as a group and taken to Sumgayit. There were 50 unidentified hooligans who suddenly started a riot at a bus terminal in Sumgayit. The USSR army did not stop the riot. The Azerbaijani authorities reportedly instigated the riot. Despite tight information control, many journalists from the West as well as Russians and Armenians arrived there just before the riot and the details of the riot were reported vividly to western countries.

¹³ Although he was sentenced to life imprisonment in Hungary, he was extradited on 31 August 2012 to Azerbaijan after his request under the Strasbourg Convention. He was greeted as a hero and promoted to the rank of major.

¹⁴ Azerbaijan express that they can give Nagorno-Karabakh the same status to Nakhichevan Autonomous Republic, but there are no conditions to implement it because of the occupation. The status of Nagorno-Karabakh is one of the largest obstacles to a peace settlement.

¹⁵ The UN cannot allow that 'national self-determination' is given priority, because the UN takes the position that the

minority problem should be resolved within the present border, basing on Article 27 of the Covenant on Civil and Political rights. However, the UN cannot express the view clearly, because Article 1 respects 'national self-determination.' On the other hand, Armenia's entry into the war without authorization of the UN Security Council is against the United Nations Charter, Article 2 (4) about the prohibition using armed force between states and Article 2 (3) which states that the conflict between states shall be settled in a peaceful manner. In addition, the occupation of the Azeri territory by the Armenians is against the UN spirit (UN 1970).

¹⁶ Field interview by Yoko Hirose with Rasim Musabekov on 25 December 2000.

¹⁷ The armed group broke into the parliament and killed 8 persons including the then Prime Minister Sarkisyan and speaker Dermichan. The perpetrators explained that they were concerned about the economic and political situation, and were against 'peace in exchange for territory.'

¹⁸ Field interview by Yoko Hirose in Baku (2000).

¹⁹ Field interview by Yoko Hirose in Yerevan (2000).

²⁰ Field interview by Yoko Hirose in Yerevan (2000).

²¹ It was inspired by the Russian-Turkish cooperation and it was designed to serve as a supplemental body for existing regional mechanisms (i.e., the OSCE Minsk Group) to resolve regional dispute as well as to reinvigorate the local economies of countries in the southern Caucasus, encourage development, cooperation and integration with the world, promote free trade, support the private sector, protect the environment, realize international pipeline projects, restructure administrative organizations, ensure transparency, resolve refugee problems and maintain harmonization. See more about the 'Caucasus Stability and Coop-

eration Platform' at Punsman 2009 and Fotiou 2009.

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